

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 ATHENS 08236 151853Z

43

ACTION EUR-08

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 EURE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 NSC-05

INR-05 INRE-00 CIAE-00 PM-03 DODE-00 IO-03 SAM-01

SAB-01 PRS-01 RSC-01 /043 W

----- 123985

O R 151655Z NOV 74

FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 6286

INFO AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI

S E C R E T ATHENS 8236

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, GR

SUBJECT: GREEK ELECTIONS: BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

1. THE GREEK ELECTIONS THAT WILL TAKE PLACE ON SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 17, ARE LIKELY TO DECIDE MORE THAN THE IDENTITY OF THE NEXT PRIME MINISTER OF GREECE. INDEED THAT QUESTION WAS PROBABLY ANSWERED BY THE DISCREDITED COLONELS IN JULY WHEN THEY ACQUIESCED IN THE RETURN OF CONSTANTINE CARAMANLIS TO ATHENS AND BY THE GREEK PEOPLE THEMSELVES WHEN THEY GREETED HIS RETURN WITH A SPONTANEOUS OUTBURST OF EMOTION THAT HAS TINGED ALMOST EVERYTHING THAT HAS HAPPENED SINCE WITH ANTICLIMAX. THERE IS NO REASON TO DOUBT, NOR ANY SIGN TO CONTRADICT THE GENERAL EXPECTATION THAT CARAMANLIS WILL BE RETRUNED TO POWER ON SUNDAY WITH A CLEAR PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY.

2. THE MORE DIFFICULT AND FAR-REACHING QUESTION IS WHAT KIND OF SOCIETY GREECE HAS BECOME IN THE TEN YEARS THAT HAVE ELAPSED SINCE THE LAST ELECTION, AND HOW THE CHANGES THAT HAVE OCCURRED WILL AFFECT THE THEORETICAL BASIS OF GREEK POLITICAL LIFE. THE MONARCHIST-VENIZELIST SPLIT THAT ANIMATED GREEK DEMOCRACY IN THE INTER-WAR PERIOD WAS

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 ATHENS 08236 151853Z

RENDERED MEANINGLESS BY THE CIVIL WAR, AT LEAST TO THE

POLITICIANS. IT LINGERED ON IN THE POPULAR CONSCIOUSNESS, AS POLITICAL MYTHS OFTEN DO, FOR ANOTHER FIFTEEN YEARS, UNTIL IT WAS GENERALLY REVEALED TO BE AN ANACHRONISM IN 1965 BY THE FORMATION OF A "VENIZELIST" CABINET SUPPORTED BY "MONARCHIST" VOTES IN THE GREEK PARLIAMENT. THE STEPHANOPOULOS GOVERNMENT OF THAT YEAR, IT SEEMS CLEAR IN RETROSPECT, CONFIRMED THE BANKRUPTCY OF THE OLD POLITICAL SYSTEM AND PREPARED THE WAY FOR THE SEVEN-YEAR MILITARY RECEIVERSHIP WHICH ENDED LAST JULY.

3. WHAT SUNDAY'S ELECTIONS WILL DECIDE IS THE CONTEXT WITHIN WHICH GREEK POLITICAL LIFE WILL EVOLVE IN THE POST-VENIZELIST PERIOD. WE SAY POST-"VENIZELIST" ADVISEDLY, BECAUSE VENIZELISM WAS THE GREEK EXPRESSION OF POLITICAL VIEWS THAT IN THE MORE INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRIES OF WESTERN EUROPE ARE VARIOUSLY CALLED LIBERAL, SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC OR SOCIALIST. THESE POLITICAL MOVEMENTS DID NOT PREVIOUSLY DEVELOP IN GREECE BECAUSE NO SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONSTITUENCY EXISTED TO SUSTAIN THEM. IN THE PAST TEN YEARS GREEK SOCIETY HAS CHANGED PROFOUNDLY AND THE EVIDENCE SUGGESTS THAT GREECE TODAY IS CLOSER IN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL TERMS TO THE ITALIAN THAN TO THE TURKISH MODEL. FROM 1964 TO 1973 PER CAPITA GNP AT CURRENT PRICES HAS TRIPLED, RISING FROM \$624 TO \$1820, AND AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION, WHICH TEN YEARS AGO ACCOUNTED FOR 75 PER CENT OF GREECE'S EXPORT EARNINGS NOW ACCOUNTS FOR ONLY 40 PER CENT. ATHENS AND THESSALONIKI HAVE INCREASED THEIR POPULATION BY ONE MILLION, WHICH MEANS THAT ROUGHLY ONE-THIRD OF THE ENTIRE POPULATION OF GREECE LIVES IN THESE TWO CITIES, WHOSE VOTERS, TOGETHER WITH THOSE OF PIRAEUS, WILL ELECT 84 OF THE 288 REGIONAL DEPUTIES IN THE GREEK PARLIAMENT.

4. IN SHORT, GREECE HAS BECOME SIGNIFICANTLY MORE URBANIZED AND INDUSTRIALIZED SINCE THE LAST ELECTIONS WERE HELD IN 1964. THESE CHANGES ARE BOUND TO AFFECT VOTING PATTERNS AND THE PARTICIPATION OF AN ESTIMATED 500,000 NEW VOTERS-- THAT IS, VOTERS WHO HAVE COME OF AGE SINCE 1964--COULD HAVE A MULTIPLIER EFFECT SINCE THEY ARE LESS LIKELY TO FOLLOW TRADITIONAL PATTERNS THAN OLDER VOTERS. THE SUCCESS OF CARAMANLIS IS ENLARGING A CONSERVATIVE

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 ATHENS 08236 151853Z

CONSTITUENCY WHOSE VOTING STRENGTH IS 35-40 PERCENT OF THE ELECTORATE WILL BE OF CRITICAL IMPORTANCE IN DETERMINING GREECE'S POLITICAL STABILITY IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE. AS SIGNIFICANT FOR THE COUNTRY'S ULTIMATE STABILITY MAY BE THE WAY THE REST OF THE ELECTORATE CHOOSES TO REDEFINE VENIZELISM IN TERMS APPROPRIATE TO THE NEW GREEK SOCIETY. THIS THEN CAN WELL BE A WATERSHED ELECTION WHOSE RESULTS WILL NOT ONLY DETERMINE WHO LEADS THE GREEKS BUT HOW AND WHERE HE WILL LEAD THEM.

5. IN THIS PROCESS THE VOTERS ARE RECEIVING ONLY INTER-MITTENT AND CONTRADICTORY ADVICE FROM THE COUNTRY'S POLITICAL LEADERSHIP WHO ARE THEMSELVES JUST BEGINNING TO APPRECIATE AND TO TRANSLATE INTO WORDS THE DIMENSIONS OF GREEK SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHANGE. PERHAPS UNSURPRISINGLY, THE APPRECIATION OF CHANGE IS MOST ACUTE AMONG THE LEADERS WHO WERE OUT OF GREECE DURING TH PERIOD OF MILITARY GOVERNMENT AND THEREFORE BETTER ABLE TO PERCEIVE WHAT WAS HAPPENING THAN THOSE WHO REMAINED AT HOME. THE TWO LEADERS WHO HAVE MADE THE MOST CONSCIOUS EFFORT TO PRESENT NOW PROGRAMS ARE CARAMANLIS AND ANDREAS PAPANDREOU, ALTHOUGH THEIR POLITICAL APPROACHES ARE RADICALLY DIVERGENT AT ALL POINTS. THOSE LIKE MAVROS, ELIOU AND GAROUFALIAS, WHO STAYED IN GREECE, ARE RESUMING THE POLITICAL DEBATE MORE OR LESS WHERE IT WAS INTERRUPTED IN APRIL OF 1967.

6. PROGRAMS DO NOT WIN ELECTIONS IN GREECE, AND THE RESULTS ON SUNDAY WILL BE MORE AFFECTED BY THE PERSONALITY AND STYLE OF PARTY LEADERSHIP, AND THE CALIBRE OF INDIVIDUAL CANDIDATES, THAN BY OTHER CONSIDERATIONS. NEVERTHELESS, IN AN ELECTION WHERE THE OLD POLITICAL REFERENCE POINTS CAN NO LONGER BE RELIED ON WITH ABSOLUTE CONFIDENCE AND WHERE BOTH CANDIDATES AND VOTERS ARE REEXAMINING THE ASSUMPTIONS ON WHICH THE OLD POLITICAL SYSTEM WAS BASED, THE PROGRAMS OF THE PARTIES ARE BEING SCRUTINIZED MORE CAREFULLY AND TO THE EXTENT THEY ARE CONVINCINGLY PROJECTED BY PARTY LEADERS MAY BE MORE INFLUENTIAL THAN EVER BEFORE.

7. THIS IS MADE MORE LIKELY BY THE ABSENCE OF CAMPAIGN ISSUES THAT CLEARLY CONFER POLITICAL ADVANTAGE ON ONE PARTY OR ANOTHER. AT FIRST GLANCE IT SEEMS REMARKABLE THAT AN ELECTIONS TAKING PLACE AFTER TEN YEARS OF POLITICAL

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 ATHENS 08236 151853Z

INERTIA SHOULD BE SO FEATURELESS. THREE EXPLANATIONS SEEM REASONABLE. THE FIRST DERIVES FROM THE SENSE OF POLITICAL EUPHORIA THAT HAS EXISTED IN GREECE SINCE THE RETURN OF CARAMANLIS, REDUCING THE BITTERNESS THAT CHARACTERIZED PREVIOUS GREEK ELECTIONS JUST AS IT HAS REDUCED THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ISSUES. THE SECOND IS THE FEELING PREVALENT AMONG MANY GREEKS THAT THE ELECTIONS REPRESENTS A POLITICAL THRESHOLD AND THAN ONLY WHEN THE DOOR HAS BEEN FIRMLY CLOSED BEHIND THEM CAN THEY BEGIN TO MAKE UP THEIR MINDS ABOUT OTHER ISSUES. GREEK VOTERS APPRECIATE THAT VERY REAL AND STILL UNRESOLVED QUESTIONS OF JUNTA PUNISHMENT, ARMED FORCES STABILITY AND LOYALTIES, AND THE DIVISIVE CYPRUS PROBLEM, LURK IN BACKGROUND AND THAT PROSPECT FOR EFFECTIVE RESTORATION OF GREECE TO POLITICAL NORMALITY DEPENDS UPON GOVERNMENT THAT EMERGES FROM THESE

ELECTIONS TO UNUSUAL DEGREE. THE LAST, BUT BY NO MEANS THE LEAST SIGNIFICANT EXPLANATION IS THAT CARAMANLIS, WHO PROBABLY HAS THE MOST TO LOSE FROM DIVISIVE DEBATE, HAS BEEN SUPREMELY SUCCESSFUL IN DISARMING POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS ISSUES LIKE PUNISHMENT OF THE JUNTA, CYPRUS, THE CROWN AND GREECE'S RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES. IN THIS AS IN OTHER RESPECTS HE HAS SHOWN HIMSELF TO BE THE MOST ASTUTE POLITICAL LEADER IN GREECE AND HAS REINFORCED HIS ALREADY IMPOSING STATURE AS A NATIONAL LEADER. MANY GREEKS MAY VOTE FOR CARAMANLIS AS A FIGURE ABOVE POLITICS IN ORDER FINALLY TO CLOSE THOSE ANOMALOUS PARENTHESES OPENED BY THE MILITARY DOUP OF ALMOST EIGHT YEARS AGO. NEXT PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS SEEM MORE LIKELY TO PRECIPITATE HEATED CLASH OF PARTY POLICIES AMONG WHICH VOTERS WILL CLEARLY MAKE CHOICE BEFORE CASTING THEIR VOTES. NAVEMBER 17 SHOULD WIPE THE POLITICAL SLATE CLEAN AND OPEN THE WAY TO A FRESH START FOR GREEK POLITICAL LIFE.

8. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, EMBASSY IS PROVIDING IN SEPTEL ITS BEST ESTIMATES OF PROBABLE RESULTS OF SUNDAY'S ELECTIONS. KUBISCH

SECRET

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ELECTION FORECASTS, ELECTION CANDIDATES, BRIEFING MATERIALS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 15 NOV 1974
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: cunninfx
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974ATHENS08236
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740330-0919
From: ATHENS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19741141/aaaabiqd.tel
Line Count: 190
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: cunninfx
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15 MAY 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <15 MAY 2002 by martinml>; APPROVED <18 MAR 2003 by cunninfx>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: GREEK ELECTIONS: BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE
TAGS: PINT, GR
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005